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News groups urge Congress not to weaken FOIA

Four organizations of print or broadcast news are circulating petitions urging Congress to reject any legislation that would weaken the Freedom of Information Act.

The organizations are asking each of their chapters to post the petitions and invite all journalists and news industry employees to sign.

Sponsoring the campaign are the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, The Newspaper Guild, the Radio-Television News Directors Association, and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

The petitions read: "Whereas, the Federal Freedom of Information Act

was enacted by Congress in 1966 in an effort to make federal agencies more open and accountable; and

"Whereas, the FOIA has been an important and effective tool for journalists, scholars, public-interest groups, and ordinary citizens to provide the public with information about governmental violations of civil liberties, bureaucratic waste and abuse, consumer fraud, and other vital issues; and

"Whereas, the Reagan Administration, intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and certain industry groups have sought legislation to greatly expand the more-than-ample exemptions in the existing act;

"Now, therefore, we, the undersigned journalists and news industry employees, support the efforts of the Society of Professional Journalists, The Newspaper Guild, the Radio-Television News Directors Association, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and other national media groups to preserve and strengthen the Federal Freedom of Information Act. We call upon Congress to reject any legislation that would weaken it."